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ABSTRACT

This study examined experienced and novice teachers' views on teaching in multicultural classrooms, asking 40 elementary student teachers and 26 cooperating teachers how they viewed the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants rated 23 statements about multicultural education on a Likert scale of agreement, and completed two open-ended questions as well. Student teachers completed pre- and post-test questionnaires at the beginning and end of their student teaching experience. Student teachers were found to be unsure about most items on the questionnaire, with rankings either widely scattered across a Likert scale or clustering in the middle indicating a lack of strong opinions. Significant changes in student teachers' attitudes following their practicum experience were only found in responses to two questions on classroom management techniques. Cooperating teachers reported a similar degree of uncertainty to that of student teachers, although they were significantly less supportive of the general merit of teaching multicultural perspectives. Results generally indicated that neither student teachers nor cooperating faculty reflect much on issues of culturally responsive pedagogy, with both groups admitting to a lack of knowledge about other cultures. (Contains 16 references.) (PB)

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Expert and Novice Teachers' Beliefs about Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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Abstract

In this study we examined experienced and novice teachers' views about teaching in multicultural classrooms. Using questionnaire data we addressed two specific questions: Do teachers think about culturally responsive pedagogy? Do experienced and novice teachers differ in their views about culturally responsive pedagogy? Our findings indicate that teachers do not think about the effects of children's culture on classroom teaching. Few differences appeared between the responses of student teachers and their cooperating teachers on this matter. In fact, both groups of teachers admitted that they knew very little about subordinate cultures in American society. Issues about the interaction between culture, classroom management and second language learners emerged as particularly sensitive with teachers in this sample. We argue that teacher education programs must change their methods courses for preparing teachers to work with children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Although it is far longer ago than would be admitted, one of us remembers being a student at Mount Carmel Elementary School. Located about twenty miles outside of New York City, this parochial school contained 48 students in each of its sixth grade classrooms. Despite these large class sizes, all the children seemed to learn. At least it appeared that way as evidenced by the long list of children waiting to attend Mt. Carmel, and the enthusiasm of students and parents at the school's bazaars and athletic events. Of course, children at Mount Carmel had few options but to learn. They learned largely through rote memorization, drill of facts, homework and oral recitation in class.

Mount Carmel's children came from middle class backgrounds. They

were of Western European descent, typically the second or third generation of their family to live in America. Although such cultural sameness may seem bland when compared to the diversity in today's schools, Mount Carmel's cultural homogeneity facilitated teaching and learning. That is, children's parents matched the school in their language and styles of speaking, forms of discipline and educational aspirations. Parents collaborated with teachers to assure that children conformed and learned. Little room or time existed for personal expression in classroom lessons. It seemed that this cultural conformity extended to all aspects of school life, including the similarity of playground arguments over whether the Yankees, Dodgers or Giants was the best team in baseball, or whether Willie Mays or Mickey Mantle was the best player.

The United States is more heterogeneous in its cultural composition than ever before. New immigrants of the 1980's came primarily from Asian-Pacific, Middle-Eastern, Caribbean and South American countries and have their own histories, languages and cultures. Like other groups before them, they contribute to America's cultural mosaic and heritage. However, American institutions, particularly its schools, are slow to adapt and change in culturally responsive ways to the needs of their new people (Hudson, Bergin, and Chryst, 1993).

Most American schools hold to Eurocentric models of education. Their curriculum, classroom materials and pedagogy remain unchanged and are much like the classrooms remembered at Mount Carmel. In many schools, for example, students are as likely now as ever only to read Dickens, Hawthorne and Shakespeare but ignore more diverse authors who present the experiences of people of color and non-European heritage. [P. I feel strongly that we should not imply that there is anything wrong with either these authors or others from the past.] Classroom pedagogy remains didactic and characterized by "chalk and talk" models of instruction.

We know that culture has a strong impact children's learning (Ferdman, 1990). Students from low-income backgrounds do poorly in school when compared to their middle class counterparts (Shannon, 1985). Minority students are known to separate themselves from mainstream school culture by increasing their use of dialect (Labov, 1972). African American adolescents sometimes choose not to succeed in school because they believe this means "acting white" and losing their socio-cultural identity (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Children, regardless of color or culture, learn better when the styles of speaking at home closely match the language styles of school (Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1982). Social relations between students and teachers/counselors can often be

facilitated or impeded by shared cultural understandings (Erickson, 1975; McDermott, 1977).

We reviewed theories of assimilation, culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy to frame the problem of this study. Most research indicates that teacher education institutions do far too little to prepare teachers for culturally heterogeneous classrooms (Bartholomae,1994; King, 1991 & 1993; Ladson-Billings,1994; Willis, 1995). New teachers are typically trained at institutions that represent mainstream interests, taught by college faculty who are unaware of the language and cultures of children in contemporary classrooms (King, 1993; Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and often practice teach in classrooms representing cultural homogeneity instead of diversity.

In this study we examined experienced and novice teachers' views about teaching culturally responsive pedagogy. We addressed two specific questions:

1. Do teachers think about culturally responsive pedagogy?
2. Do experienced and novice teachers differ in their views about culturally responsive pedagogy?

Method

Forty (40) elementary student teachers and 26 cooperating teachers served as the subjects of this study. One of the teachers was African American, and all others were Caucasian and of European descent. English was the primary language for all the subjects in the study. All the student teachers were undergraduate or graduate student teachers at a small liberal arts college in northeast New York.

We collected data from the student teachers during two meetings on the college campus. The night preceding the beginning of the fall semester we asked all student teachers to complete a questionnaire. Three months later, after two student teaching placements, the students reanswered the same questionnaire. Cooperating teachers completed identical questionnaires and mailed their responses to the college. We encouraged all our cooperating teachers to participate, but clearly indicated this was voluntary.

The first section of the questionnaire contained two open-ended items eliciting respondents' thoughts about teaching in classrooms with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. The first question pertained to the positive aspects of teaching in multicultural classrooms (*What benefits do you perceive for yourself and your students when teaching in*

a classroom with children from culturally diverse backgrounds?) The second open-ended question asked about challenges and concerns when teaching in classrooms with a diverse student body (*What concerns do you have for yourself and your students when teaching in a classroom with children from diverse cultural backgrounds?*).

The second section of the questionnaire provided the majority of the data for this paper. We designed 30 Likert items to elicit the respondents' (student teachers and cooperating teachers) thoughts about teaching in multicultural classrooms. Each of the question items required respondents to rank on a Likert scale, from 1 through 7, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the given statements. Thirteen of these Likert items presented general statements about teaching and learning. The first of these general items asked the following: *Teachers should teach basically the same way regardless of children's ethnicity, family or language backgrounds.* The second item contained a similar proposition: *All children, regardless of their ethnicity, family and language backgrounds effectively learn from the same teaching methods.* The other general question items asked whether curriculum goals and objectives should be changed in culturally diverse classrooms, whether teachers should change their communication and management styles, and whether family

background, gender or language/dialect greatly impacted children's learning. Seventeen items were more specific about teaching methods, asking respondents if they would change their methods, materials, management and communication styles to fit children's family/community backgrounds, ethnicity and language backgrounds.

We analyzed the Likert items on the questionnaire in two ways. First we prepared frequency rankings for each of the question items. We then examined the frequency items to determine if the student teachers changed in their responses from before and after student teaching. We then prepared frequency rankings for the cooperating teachers' responses to the questionnaire and contrasted their rankings with those of the student teachers. Finally, we computed the Mann Whitney U to determine whether any observed differences (before and after student teaching and between student teachers and cooperating teachers) emerged in their frequency rankings as statistically significant.

We analyzed the two open-ended items by first compiling a master list for two groups. After examining this data, we prepared categories in which all responses could easily be classified. For the question about the benefits of teaching in multicultural classrooms we identified three categories: (1) incorporating children's culture into one's teaching; (2)

learning about other cultures; (3) appreciating and value other cultures. For the question about disadvantages when teaching in multicultural classrooms we identified three major categories again: (1) language barrier between children and school; (2) lack of knowledge of how to incorporate children's backgrounds into their teaching; (3) social conflict and intolerance in the classroom. Then we reexamined all open-ended responses and coded them according to frequency that a category appeared in their answers.

Results

We first examined the student teachers' rankings before student teaching, and then we compared their rankings to the same items after they completed student teaching. Next we compared the student teachers' rankings with those of their cooperating teachers. Lastly we prepared a qualitative analysis of both groups' responses to the two opened ended items on the questionnaire.

Before Student Teaching

The first finding to emerge from our analyses of frequency rankings of the student teachers was that for 75% of the items (N=23), the student teachers lacked a clear point of view. Their responses scattered broadly

across the seven point scale, or they rated the items in the middle (3-4-5) of the Likert scale, indicating a lack of certainty about the particular items.

Next, we identified those rankings of the student teachers which reflected strong agreement or disagreement. We used 50% as our criterion to identify items where student teachers held clearly defined positions of agreement or disagreement. That is, when 50% or more of the respondents answered with rankings of 1 or 2 we judged those responses as evidence for strong disagreement to the questionnaire stem. Similarly, when they responded with rankings in the middle of the Likert scale (rankings of 3, 4 or 5), we used it as evidence of uncertainty as to how to respond to the question stem. Finally, we judged items on the other end of the Likert scale (6 and 7) as documentation of strong agreement to the question item.

The student teachers revealed strong points of view about seven of the questionnaire items (7 out of 30). They strongly disagreed with six items and strongly agreed with one.

Student teachers disagreed with the item about teaching basically the same way, regardless of students' ethnicity, family or language backgrounds (*Teachers should teach basically the same way, regardless of*

their students' ethnicity, family or language backgrounds). They disagreed with a similar item about learning the same way (*All children regardless of their ethnicity, family and language backgrounds, learn from the same teaching methods*). The student teachers also disagreed with the item about curriculum goals and objectives being the same for all children (*Curriculum goals and objectives would be the same for all children, regardless of students' ethnicity, family or language backgrounds*). The item about communication style also elicited strong disagreement (*Teachers should use the same communication style regardless of children's ethnicity, family or language backgrounds*). The one item about gender also provoked strong disagreement (*Gender differences greatly impact children's learning of math and science*). More than half of the student teachers revealed strong disagreement with the questionnaire item about using the same reading materials with children regardless of cultural background (*I plan to use the same reading materials regardless of children's family, community backgrounds and ethnicity*).

Only one questionnaire item elicited strong student teacher agreement. More than half of the student teachers indicated that they viewed multiculturalism as a model for children to learn what we all have in common (*The primary purpose of teaching multicultural perspectives in*

my classroom will be for children to see how we are alike).

After Student Teaching

We found very little change in student responses after student teaching. They remained unsure in about 75% of the items (N=23); that is, either their rankings were broadly spread across the seven point scale or they ranked themselves in the middle of the scale, which also indicates a lack of strong point of view.

Student teachers only changed their rankings to one questionnaire item. Prior to student teaching, the student teachers revealed uncertainty with all five questionnaire items about classroom management. After student teaching they changed their ranks to one of these items (*I plan to change my management strategies when children come from language and dialect backgrounds that are different than my own*). Prior to student teaching 55% of the group indicated uncertainty about the stem, but after student teaching, 41% indicated strong disagreement and another 40% revealed uncertainty. The Mann Whitney U indicated significant difference in their before and after responses on this item ($p<.04$).

Further analysis of student teachers' before and after responses revealed that two other items about classroom management approached significant difference. On the item about changing management strategies

to fit children's ethnic backgrounds (*I plan to change my classroom management strategies when children are from ethnic backgrounds that are different from my own*) the student teachers initially revealed uncertainty about the stem (53% at 3, 4 and 5 Likert ranking), but after student teaching nearly half (45%) answered with strong disagreement; the Mann Whitney U indicated significant change on this item ($p<.05$). One other management item revealed change in the student teachers' responses before and after student teaching: On the general item about management and family background, language and ethnicity, the student teachers revealed uncertainty before student teaching, but afterward more than two times as many (18% to 40%) disagreed with the same stem (*I plan to use the same classroom management strategies regardless of children's family and language backgrounds, or ethnicity*).

Comparing Student Teachers' and Cooperating Teachers' Responses

Cooperating teachers' responses to the questionnaire items revealed close similarity to those of student teachers. As a group they only revealed strong points of view about 8 of the questionnaire items, and lacked certainty about 73% of them (N=22). They disagreed with items about teaching the same way regardless of children's backgrounds, children learning the same regardless of their backgrounds, using the

same communication style, gender differences impacting learning, using the same materials regardless of children's ethnicity or family backgrounds, and using multicultural perspectives to see the differences people have with one another. They strongly agreed with only one item about using multicultural perspectives to see how people are more alike than different.

Only one significant difference between cooperating teachers and student teachers emerged in their rankings. This was the item eliciting responses about the general merit of teaching multicultural perspectives ($p<.02$) (*The primary purpose of teaching multicultural perspectives in my classroom will be for children to see how we are different*). Cooperating teachers strongly disagreed but the student teachers' answers reflected uncertainty.

On three questionnaire items about language, the cooperating teachers' and student teachers' rankings approached significant difference. On an item about learning English (*Learning English should take precedence over learning the subject areas for children with limited proficiency in English*), more of the student teachers strongly disagreed than did the cooperating teachers ($p<.08$); the cooperating teachers' responses spread evenly over the Likert scale (1-2=26%, 3-5=33% and 6-

7=33%) but the student teachers answered with stronger disagreement (1-2=31%, 3-5 = 45%, 6-7 = 13%) and less agreement. Another questionnaire item pertained to restricting children's language to English when in their classrooms (*Children with limited proficiency in English should be encouraged to only use English when in my classroom*), and on this item more of the cooperating teachers agreed (33% vs 13%) but the student teachers indicated uncertainty or disagreement ($p<.08$). On a third question item about language, the two groups approached significant difference ($p<.053$) in their rankings; on this item (*Language and dialect differences greatly impact children's success in school*) twice as many of the cooperating teachers strongly agreed with this item than student teachers did (37% vs 18%).

Analysis of Open-ended items

The questionnaires contained two open-ended items about advantages and concerns of teaching in multicultural classrooms (*What benefits do you perceive for yourself and your students when teaching in a classroom with children from culturally diverse backgrounds? What concerns do you perceive for yourself and your students when teaching in a classroom with children from culturally diverse backgrounds?*).

To examine these items, we categorized responses according to

their focus. When examining the responses about advantages of teaching in multicultural classrooms, the affective or attitudinal dimension emerged first in frequency of appearance. Both student teachers and cooperating teachers responded more frequently about learning to appreciate diversity and valuing difference as the greatest benefit of multiethnic classrooms. Second in frequency pertained to teachers and children learning about other cultures; comments pertaining to holidays and cultural heritage often appeared in these answers. Third in frequency were all responses indicating that cultural knowledge would be specifically included in their curriculum or teaching in some way.

When we examined the respondents' concerns about teaching in multicultural classrooms, the most frequently occurring response pertained to teachers not knowing enough about children's cultural backgrounds. Second in frequency were responses relating to language and communication differences between teachers and children, or teachers and parents; cooperating teachers responded in this way far more frequently than student teachers. Lastly, social conflict and intolerance in the classroom emerged as the third most frequent category of response. Teachers often wrote responses about children learning prejudices from their families and acting on their prejudices when in school.

Our analyses of the open-ended responses about advantages of teaching in multicultural classrooms, indicate that appreciation and value of social difference appeared most frequently. Learning about other cultures appeared second in frequency. However, when addressing concerns about teaching in multicultural classrooms, the groups displayed anxiety about not knowing children's cultural backgrounds well enough to include them in classroom teaching and learning activities. Language barriers emerged as a second concern, and conflict due to prejudice and bigotry acquired from parents appeared as a third concern.

Discussion

The results of our study indicate that teachers do not think about culturally responsive pedagogy. Neither student teachers nor their cooperating teachers reflect on the interaction between culture and teaching. In the broadest sense, of course, they do. For example, when asked to react to statements indicating that teaching methods should never be changed or that children always learn the same way, our respondents answered that such statements are not true. However, when asked whether they would change their methods, management or communication strategies to fit children's cultural backgrounds the answers of both groups indicated uncertainty 75% of the time.

We know that teaching methods have changed very little. When specific groups of children exhibit difficulty learning, schools are very quick to blame their families and identify the children as "at risk" or "disabled." Seldom to schools and teachers identity classroom pedagogy as the cause of children's learning problems.

The experience of student teaching did not precipitate change in students teachers' thoughts about culturally responsive pedagogy. Only one questionnaire item, about children's language and classroom management, indicated significant change over the course of student teaching, but the results indicate greater uncertainty about this issues. On related issues about classroom management the student teachers' rankings approached significant difference, but with each item they grew in their ambiguity as to how to answer. Classroom management is always a difficult issue for new teachers, and the results of our study reflect their concern in this area.

Several items about English and second language speakers emerged as provocative question stems. In all cases pertaining to second language, the rankings of the cooperating teachers and students approached statistical difference from each other. Cooperating teachers were generally more ethnocentric when answering questions about using

another language to learn subject areas and allowing children to use other languages in the classrooms. Student teachers generally seemed more open about using other language for learning than their cooperating teachers did.

Both groups answers revealed a lack of knowledge about other cultures. In fact, both student teachers and cooperating teachers indicated that their lack of knowledge about other cultures was their greatest concern when teaching in multicultural classrooms. This admitted concern confirms our analyses of the Likert rankings in which teachers seemed uncertain how to respond to questions about culture and teaching.

After discovering the degree of uncertainty and lack of knowledge of both novice and experienced teachers, we further examined issues pertaining to culturally responsive teaching. How is teaching in culturally heterogeneous classrooms different from teaching in classrooms where there is little diversity? We see three ways of answering this question. One is an assimilationist perspective on teaching and learning that argues for little or no change in pedagogy. This conservative and status quo argument assumes that children from diverse cultures should learn the superordinate culture. If cultural mismatches occur between children and school, whether with language or life experience, the responsibility for

change lies with family. The assimilationist perspective requires children to adapt to mainstream ways of learning in school.

Accommodation is a second perspective which explains how teaching differs in culturally diverse classrooms and homogeneous ones. Accommodation requires teachers to change their methods to match children's cultural backgrounds. There are many ways teachers can become culturally responsive to children's learning needs - change of classroom reading material is one. Teachers using a model of accommodation will select reading material that portrays and celebrates the language and culture of their students. Points of view about cultural readings range from an additive approach in which relevant literature is used with existing classroom readings, to a more ethnocentric approach in which mainstream reading material is replaced with texts matching children's life experiences (Banks, 1994).

Teachers can become culturally responsive by constructing a variety of ways for children to use language in their classrooms. Mason and Au (1981) have explained one example of this by documenting how cultures use different ways of speaking and how these ways impact children's learning. In traditional classrooms teachers maintain control of discussion topics and speaking turns by filtering topic selection and turns

at speaking. In Native Hawaiian homes, however, discourse is often different. Specifically, turns at speaking happen spontaneously and without adult mediation; children add to one another's stories by adding-on to what has been said. Au and Mason compared reading lessons of a mainstream teacher who followed conventional models of classroom discourse with those of a native teacher who encouraged children to use a "talk story" model of turn-taking. Analysis of children's comprehension of reading texts indicated that children participating in natural discourse patterns understood the stories more than those following conventional discourse structures. Studies of classroom organization indicate that cooperative learning, whether in pairs or small groups, contributes to culturally responsive teaching (Wheeler, 1992). Children can learn with one another and minimize cultural differences between themselves and their teachers. Classrooms that create opportunities for children to learn collaboratively are often more culturally sensitive to children's backgrounds and languages than those that only offer teacher-centered pedagogy.

While many teachers still frown upon children using any language but English in their classrooms, Cummins (1994) explains that acceptance of other languages displays respect and value for children's culture and

improves their learning. Cummins argues that teachers who encourage children to use their primary or first language while learning English produce greater academic achievement than those who do not.

Classroom management is another area where teachers can become culturally responsive. Delpit (1987) has argued that process classrooms, like whole language, are too indirect for children of minority cultures. African American children, Delpit argues, need explicit and direct explanation of classroom rules. When rules are implicit, minority children can easily misinfer teacher expectations. Furthermore, Delpit argues that African American children are accustomed to a direct style of adult interaction that displays authority and power, and classroom teachers should replicate it.

A third perspective for answering how teaching differs in culturally diverse classrooms from culturally homogeneous ones, is that of critical pedagogy (Bartholomae, 1994; Friere, 1982; Giroux, 1994; King, 1991; Shore, 1993; Willis,1995). Although not denying the importance of specific teaching methods, a knowledge of methods without thorough understanding student culture is insufficient. Delpit (1992) shares a Native Alaskan axiom that addresses this point: "In order to teach you, I must know you ," (p. 249) meaning that one can not teach another without

understanding their culture. Effective teachers are those who understand, appreciate and value children's language and culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Willis, 1995). The interaction between culture, language and teaching is the foundation of classroom pedagogy. Teachers using this model teach through children's culture.

Conclusions

We believe schools must do more to inform and educate their faculties about the influence of culture upon children's learning. Equally important, teacher education institutions must emphasize the interaction between culture, pedagogy and learning. Clearly, teaching methods of the past that worked well with culturally homogeneous classrooms of children need scrutiny to fit classrooms with children from many diverse cultural backgrounds.

A number of years ago, teachers lived or participated in the communities in which they taught. Teacher education institutions often required their students to visit children's families and participate in community events. This no longer occurs, and teachers are often unaware of children's cultural backgrounds. We believe teachers are invisible in the communities they teach; that is, they enter the communities in the morning and leave in the afternoons without participating or

understanding the communities where they work. We agree with Delpit when she shared the axiom that "to teach you is to know you". Teachers in this multicultural society must learn to teach and construct learning activities through children's cultures - not doing otherwise will be tragic for children, families and our communities. Real and significant change on these matters of culture and pedagogy are desperately needed in teacher education programs.

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